

European Commission survey shows citizens worry about interference ahead of the European elections

A new Eurobarometer survey published today sheds light on the expectations of Europeans for the May 2019 European elections and what would motivate them to cast their vote. It also shows that a majority of EU citizens are worried that disinformation campaigns, data breaches and cyberattacks will interfere with electoral processes.

[The 2018 annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights](#) is bringing together politicians, researchers, journalists, NGOs and activists to discuss how to make our democracies more resilient and inclusive, how to support civil society and better safeguard free and fair elections.

Frans **Timmermans**, First Vice-President of the European Commission said: *“Our research shows that people are really worried about disinformation. The good thing is that more and more citizens are critical of the information they are offered, and well aware of the dark forces that would like to manipulate what they read, think and ultimately vote for. For the legitimacy of our European democracy it is essential that citizens use their right to vote. And that’s why we all, EU institutions and Member States, must protect our elections and bolster our democracy.”*

Věra **Jourová**, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality added: *“This survey confirms that Europeans know that the upcoming elections will not be business as usual. They expect actions that will guarantee fair and secure elections and more information about the EU and new faces in politics. We are fighting against illegal data manipulation, countering disinformation and make our elections more resilient. But we also need the full involvement of EU governments and all political parties. We can only address peoples’ concerns if we do this together.”*

What Europeans want ahead of European elections

42 % of Europeans went to the polls for the 2014 European elections. The figures published today indicate what could bring more Europeans to vote:

- 43 % of the respondents would like to receive more information on the EU and its impact on their daily lives;
- 31 % want more young people standing as candidates.

The Juncker Commission has been working actively on bringing the EU closer to its citizens. The European Commissioners reached out to citizens and participated in over a thousand [Citizens’ dialogues](#) since the beginning of the mandate.

The Commission has launched several campaigns, including the [EU Protects](#)

campaign and the [EU and Me](#) campaign, which reaches out to younger generations. Ahead of the elections, the European Commission together with the European Parliament will run awareness-raising campaigns to mobilise citizens to vote.

Concerns related to elections

Today's figures show that Europeans are worried about interference in the elections:

- **61%** worry that elections can be manipulated through cyberattacks,
- **59%** worry about foreign actors and criminal groups influencing elections
- **67%** worry that personal data left online could be used to target the political messages they see.

But Europeans overwhelmingly agree (74- 81%) on the way to tackle these threats:

- by introducing more transparency to online social media platforms, including on clearly indicating who is behind online advertisement;
- by giving equal opportunities to all political parties to access online services to compete for voters' attention;
- by giving a right to reply for candidates or political parties on social media;
- by introducing the same silence period online as already exists for traditional media.

Tackling challenges

In September, the European Commission already put forward a [set of concrete measures](#) to make sure that next year's European Parliament elections are organised in a free, fair and secure manner. The measures include greater transparency in online political advertisements and the possibility to impose sanctions for the illegal use of personal data in order to deliberately influence the outcome of the European elections.

The European Commission also set up a **European electoral cooperation network**, which will meet for the first time in January 2019. The Commission calls on Member States to nominate their representative for this network as soon as possible. The Fundamental Rights Colloquium will look into potential solutions ahead of the network's first meeting.

On disinformation, the European Commission is taking a number of actions. Major tech companies signed the [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) last month that will help provide more transparency on sponsored political advertising online. The European Commission and the External Action Service (EEAS) are currently finalising a common Action Plan on disinformation for a coordinated response at Union and Member State level to the threat of disinformation. This action Plan is to be adopted in the coming weeks.

Background

The [Eurobarometer survey on Democracy and Elections](#) was conducted 27,474

face-to-face at respondents' home in 28 EU Member States.

The set of measures to [protect European elections](#) focus on:

- **Data protection:** improving the protection of personal data in the electoral context
- **Transparency:** guaranteeing the transparency of online political advertising
- **Cybersecurity:** protecting elections from cyberattacks
- **Cooperation:** improving national and European cooperation on potential threats to European Parliament elections
- **Appropriate sanctions:** guaranteeing that electoral rules are respected by all

**For more
information**

The [Eurobarometer Democracy and Elections – report and factsheets](#)

[State of the Union 2018: Securing free and fair European elections](#)

[Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights 2018](#)